

# Helvetia achieves 99.9% uptime for insurance services with Red Hat



## Software

Red Hat® OpenShift® Container Platform

Red Hat JBoss® Enterprise Application Platform

Red Hat AMQ

Red Hat Ansible® Automation

Red Hat Satellite

## Services

Red Hat Consulting

Red Hat Technical Account Management

Swiss insurance company Helvetia faced availability and performance challenges while running its customer-facing applications on legacy, on-premise hardware. To gain the agility needed to stay competitive, the company expanded its Red Hat application environment to a new public cloud solution based on Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform running on Amazon Web Services (AWS). With this new environment, Helvetia has achieved over 99.9% uptime for its services, reduced time to market from months to weeks, and built a path to reduce costs.



## Insurance industry

6,600 employees

## Benefits

- Increased service uptime to over 99.9%
- Reduced time to market for new applications from months to weeks
- Improved issue resolution with support from Red Hat Technical Account Manager
- Anticipates significant reductions in hardware and operational costs

*"When migration of all of our applications to OpenShift is complete, we expect to see substantial financial savings each year."*

**Dr. Nikolas Nehmer**  
Head Of Helvetia Container Platform,  
The Helvetia Group



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*"When you adopt an agile development process and produce software—and results—fast, it can transform the business and provide a completely new way to do projects. Without Red Hat OpenShift, this shift would not be possible."*

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Head Of Helvetia Container Platform,  
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## SERVICE AVAILABILITY AFFECTS INSURANCE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The Helvetia Group is an international insurance group with more than 5 million customers and a business volume worth approximately €8 billion. Based in Switzerland, it is one of the country's leading insurers. Helvetia also operates profitably in other European countries, including Germany, Austria, Italy, and Spain.

The company had used Red Hat JBoss Enterprise Application Platform (EAP) to build JavaTM applications running on-premise on its servers but needed to enhance its development capabilities to stay competitive in the increasingly crowded insurance market.

"We had standardized our creation of web-based applications on established, monolithic multi-tier architectures," said Nikolas Nehmer, Head of Helvetia Container Platform at The Helvetia Group. "We wanted to move to a cloud-native software environment so we could build an engaging customer experience for new and existing applications, as well as significantly enhance agility and time to market."

Additionally, the company's back-end systems lacked the availability to provide the instant response times expected by customers used to the high reliability of digital pioneers like Google and Facebook.

"Consumers now have vastly different expectations. Response times of several seconds or downtime from system outages are unacceptable," said Nehmer. "Today's users like to access our systems in the evenings or on weekends, and we need to have the resilience to support that. We want to develop an application approach decoupled from our system components to make sure customers have a completely responsive experience."

## CREATING A FLEXIBLE, CLOUD-NATIVE DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT

To overcome these challenges, Helvetia sought to build an automated, cloud-first IT environment with greater responsiveness. The company chose Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform, running in the public cloud on Amazon Web Services (AWS) as the foundation of this environment.

"We looked at alternatives, but we felt that Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform was simply better than its competitors, especially in developer experience," said Nehmer. "We were also impressed by Red Hat's people and its culture. They offer amazing technical skills, and for a complex project like this, you need great people you can have a good relationship with and can rely on."

Based on Kubernetes container technology, OpenShift Container Platform provides a modular, flexible infrastructure for the company's existing applications, migrated from its legacy hardware environment, as well as new, cloud-native applications. Multi-environment support and automated life-cycle management help streamline application creation. OpenShift's compatibility with a variety of cloud vendors also supports potential adoption of a hybrid or multicloud approach in the future.

Helvetia's OpenShift environment is enhanced by Red Hat AMQ, a messaging solution based on the Apache Kafka open source project that provides high-performance data streaming. Its AMQ streams capability integrates the features of Kafka with Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform, bridging Helvetia's legacy, mainframe infrastructure and new, modern front-end environment.

Additionally, Red Hat Ansible Tower provides automated management capabilities through an integrated, user-friendly interface, and Red Hat Satellite keeps the company's Red Hat environment updated with the latest performance and security releases.

Helvetia worked closely with Red Hat Consulting for training and best practices guidance during the project. "We originally used open source software for a proof of concept, but as an insurance company, we needed to ensure we have appropriate support. We started with no OpenShift experience, so it was crucial for us to have the help of Red Hat's consultants and their deep product knowledge. They're experienced, and they know what works best," said Nehmer.

## IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH FASTER, MORE RELIABLE SERVICES

### ACHIEVED 99.9% SERVICE UPTIME

Its new cloud platform has helped Helvetia achieve its goal of substantially improving the availability of customer-facing applications. Now, the company can meet service expectations by providing information to potential customers and offering 24x7 processing of requests, such as purchases or claim notifications.

"On our old platform, we couldn't guarantee availability, and a typical legacy mainframe-based infrastructure regularly needs several hours of planned maintenance," said Nehmer. "Now, with the solid platform we've built on OpenShift, we're achieving 99.9% uptime or more."

### REDUCED TIME TO MARKET FROM MONTHS TO WEEKS

Helvetia has also substantially cut time to market for its new applications. For example, a new chatbot to report bicycle theft claims was created and released online in only a few months.

"Our agility has massively improved. Previously, it took two to six months to get an application environment up and running, including setting up the infrastructure and servers. Now, it just takes ten minutes to provision an application environment," said Nehmer. "Our potential time to market to roll out a new application has gone from 6-12 months down to just a couple of weeks."

Much of this improvement is due to automating with Ansible Automation and providing self-service access to development resources. "The speed and standardization benefits of automation make our development environment easier to monitor, manage, and operate," said Nehmer.

### IMPROVED ISSUE RESOLUTION

The company works with a dedicated Red Hat Technical Account Manager (TAM) to solve any issues faster and look ahead to future possibilities for its Red Hat environment. The TAM holds regular weekly conference calls with Helvetia, as well as being available when needed.

"Working with our TAM gives us confidence in knowing a problem will definitely be solved," said Nehmer. "Instead of just opening a ticket, he provides a single point of contact between Red Hat and our teams. It's good to have someone who really pushes to find solutions for difficult issues and advocates for us."

### ESTABLISHED PATH TO SUBSTANTIAL FINANCIAL SAVINGS

By migrating to its new, cloud-first environment, Helvetia can reduce the amount of hardware it needs to buy and manage, as well as gaining the capability to streamline its operational processes. Additionally, using OpenShift Container Platform and JBoss EAP together has reduced subscription costs while adding new capabilities.

"When migration of all of our applications to OpenShift is complete, we expect to see significant financial savings," said Nehmer.

## EXPANDING CLOUD PLATFORM TO NEW REGIONS

Helvetia is planning to continue migrating and building applications with Red Hat OpenShift Container Platform. Over the next two years, it plans to migrate more than 100 Java applications from its on-premise systems and retire its legacy hardware.

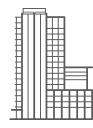
The company is also discussing expanding its use of OpenShift beyond Switzerland to more countries, including Germany and Austria.

"Our OpenShift platform is already a success, and it's still growing. We started with a small group of developers, but now the platform holds a core position in our company and others are realizing its benefits," said Nehmer. "When you adopt an agile development process and produce software—and results—fast, it can transform the business and provide a completely new way to do projects. Without Red Hat OpenShift, this change would not be possible."

## ABOUT THE HELVETIA GROUP

In 160 years, the Helvetia Group has grown into a successful international insurance group. Today, Helvetia has subsidiaries in its home market Switzerland as well as in the countries that make up the Europe market area: Germany, Italy, Austria and Spain. With its Specialty Markets market area, Helvetia is also present in France and in selected regions worldwide. Helvetia is active in the life and non-life business, and also offers customized specialty lines and reinsurance cover. Its business activities focus on retail customers as well as small and medium-sized companies and larger corporates. The company provides services to more than 5 million customers, with a business volume of CHF 9.07 billion.

### About Red Hat



Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers integrate new and existing IT applications, develop cloud-native applications, standardize on our industry-leading operating system, and automate, secure, and manage complex environments. Award-winning support, training, and consulting services make Red Hat a trusted adviser to the Fortune 500. As a strategic partner to cloud providers, system integrators, application vendors, customers, and open source communities, Red Hat can help organizations prepare for the digital future.



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